

# Sounds of Palestine

A long-term community music project for children in Palestine inspired by the music school movement "El Sistema"



## Projectdossier

# Project dossier *Sounds of Palestine*

<b>Project name</b>	<i>Sounds of Palestine</i>
<b>Project website</b>	<a href="https://www.soundsofpalestine.org">https://www.soundsofpalestine.org</a>
<b>Trustee organization</b>	Katharina-Werk Sounds of Palestine Association
<b>Address</b>	Neubadstrasse 95 4054 Basel Email: <a href="mailto:sekretariat@katharina-werk.org">sekretariat@katharina-werk.org</a>
<b>Overall management</b>	Katja Eckardt Managing director and initiator <a href="mailto:k.eckardt@soundsofpalestine.org">k.eckardt@soundsofpalestine.org</a>
<b>Account Swiss donations</b>	Katharina-Werk Sounds of Palestine Giro checking account 89-188693-1 IBAN CH64 0900 0000 8918 8693 1 BIC POFICHBEXXX
<b>Facebook:</b>	<a href="http://www.facebook.com/soundsofpalestine">www.facebook.com/soundsofpalestine</a> Accessible without a Facebook account
<b>Videos:</b>	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sMoxlLGtYQY">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sMoxlLGtYQY</a> For more about our lessons <a href="https://www.youtube.com/user/soundsofpalestine/videos">https://www.youtube.com/user/soundsofpalestine/videos</a> Current videos of lessons and concerts

# Table of Contents

- 1. Summary ..... 4
- 2. Trusteeship ..... 4
  - 2.1 Umbrella organization: Katharina-Werk Basel ..... 4
  - 2.2 Trustee organization: Katharina-Werk Sounds of Palestine..... 5
- 3. Project description ..... 5
  - 3.1 Background ..... 5
  - 3.2 Project goals..... 5
  - 3.3 Target group and participants ..... 6
  - 3.4 Program activities ..... 6
  - 3.5 Impressions from the afternoon program ..... 7
- 4. Milestones and prospects..... 8
- 5. Impact..... 9
  - 5.1 Quality assurance and monitoring..... 9
  - 5.2 Results..... 9
- 6. Financing ..... 9
  - 6.1 Financial strategy..... 9
  - 6.2 Expense structure ..... 10
  - 6.3 Funding areas..... 10

## 1. Summary

*Sounds of Palestine* is a long-term community music project for disadvantaged children in Palestine that began in Bethlehem in 2012. It was inspired by the Venezuelan music school program and subsequent movement "El Sistema".<sup>1</sup> *Sounds of Palestine* combines music education with social education. It comprises a kindergarten program with 90 participating children and an afternoon program currently attended by 170 students.

Its aim is to support the development of the children and to strengthen their social skills. Playing music in groups on several afternoons a week, builds the children's self-confidence, stamina, and ability to concentrate, as well as their willingness to cooperate. It helps them let go of their fears and cope with the frequent challenges of their daily lives. The program is designed to cover the entire school years of the participating children and can thus set sustainable impulses. This long-term aspect of *Sounds of Palestine* is a special feature in the local project landscape.

Participating children have displayed very positive social developments. Especially children who have been participating in the program for several years, find it increasingly easy to interact with one another in a respectful manner and to cooperate and abide by rules. Feedback from parents has shown that these changes in behavior have impacted the entire family and this will also benefit society in general. In the long run, families and communities benefit from children who have trained and practiced constructive conflict resolution.

With a team in Palestine and the Katharina-Werk Basel as the umbrella organization, the project is professionally organized and well-coordinated: Financing/fundraising is done by the team in Basel, the strategic direction is developed in close cooperation between the team in Basel and the management team in Palestine, and the operational implementation is the responsibility of the local staff.

The program is free of charge for the participating children. Aside from a contribution by the Katharina-Werk, the project costs, which amount to approximately CHF 450,000 annually, are financed entirely by donations. To ensure the continuity of the program, *Sounds of Palestine* holds a financial reserve to cover the running costs for approximately nine months.

## 2. Trusteeship

*Sounds of Palestine* is a project by the Katharina-Werk Basel. Project business is managed by the Katharina-Werk Sounds of Palestine association and the representative office of Katharina-Werk in Palestine.

### 2.1 Umbrella organization: Katharina-Werk Basel

Katharina-Werk Basel is a Christian ecumenical community with an interreligious orientation. It was founded in 1913. One of the community's primary concerns is peace work, both in Switzerland and abroad. For more than ten years, Israel and Palestine have been an important focal point of the community's work. Katharina-Werk Basel is registered in Palestine as an international organization and maintains a legal representative office in Palestine.

*Sounds of Palestine* started operations in Bethlehem in 2012 under the trusteeship of Katharina-Werk Basel. After the initial five years of the project, the trusteeship was transferred to the Katharina-Werk Sounds of Palestine association.

---

<sup>1</sup> The El Sistema concept was developed over 40 years ago for children in the slums and uses music education to promote long-term social change. It has since been successfully introduced in over 60 countries around the world and has been adapted to local conditions in independent and autonomous projects.

## 2.2 Trustee organization: Katharina-Werk Sounds of Palestine

Katharina-Werk *Sounds of Palestine* is an organization belonging to Katharina-Werk, an independent, neutral, and tax-exempt association, that manages the *Sounds of Palestine* project. Its operations in Palestine are managed by the representative office of Katharina-Werk in Palestine.

## 3. Project description

### 3.1 Background

The political situation in Palestine is deadlocked, with no solution in sight to the conflict that has lasted for decades. One consequence of this is the poor economic situation in which Palestine finds itself: Unemployment and poverty are widespread, and insecurity is high. Distress and a lack of prospects foster a culture of frustration and violence. Everyone is suffering from this situation: however, the children suffer the most. Many of them grow up in an environment where there are hardly any safe places to play, and they are repeatedly victims or witnesses of violence. Since they often lack positive role models and opportunities for personal development, they find it difficult to develop new prospects for themselves, their communities and country. The project targets the fourth generation of the Palestinian conflict.

### 3.2 Project goals

The participating children come from socially disadvantaged families and a very difficult environment. They have little hope of improving their situation. Playing music on a regular basis in a protected setting and the care provided by the social pedagogical workers at *Sounds of Palestine*, helps the young people let go of their fears and allows them to cope with their challenging daily lives.

#### Central project goals

- The program has a far-reaching, transformative and stabilizing effect on the children and their social environment.
- Locals are hired to work for the project and are given additional training as needed.
- In the long run, program graduates will be given precedence for jobs.

#### Social goals

- The young people's self-confidence, stamina, concentration, and willingness to cooperate noticeably improve.
- Children and adolescents can develop new, positive prospects for the future, which will give them stability and structure.
- The children and adolescents learn to assume responsibility for themselves and their environment.
- The project teaches young people to deal with their emotions in a socially acceptable manner and to resolve conflicts constructively.
- The children and adolescents learn to work together to achieve shared goals, thus increasing their performance.

#### Musical goals

##### For kindergarten-aged children

- A repertoire of songs and dances is elaborated.
- The children learn to play simple rhythmic instruments, to recognize the sounds of different instruments and to clap simple beats.

- The distinction between sound and silence, high and low, loud and quiet, long and short notes, fast and slow rhythms is practiced.

#### **For school-aged children**

- The children learn to play an instrument and play music together in different groups.
- They sing Arabic songs and world music in a choir.
- They practice performing for an audience.

### **3.3 Target group and participants**

The program is aimed at children from the refugee camps Al'Azzeh, Aida and Dheisheh in Bethlehem.

The families of participating children and adolescents are also integrated into the project. Currently, approximately 120 families benefit from the project. They receive counseling from the project's social pedagogical staff and participate in concerts.

The team currently consists of a project manager, a music director, seven music teachers, four social pedagogical workers, a guard, two cleaners, a secretary, and a bookkeeper. In addition to a regular salary, they all have opportunities for further training.

### **3.4 Program activities**

#### **Kindergarten program**

Group lessons for kindergarten children are integrated into regular kindergarten hours in the form of early music education provided by the *Sounds of Palestine* project. Once a week, the project ensures that the participating children receive early musical education such as singing, dancing/movement, playing with rhythms, clapping, playful learning of basic principles like high and low tones, loud and quiet, long and short notes, etc.

#### **Afternoon program for school children**

When the participating children start the first grade, they can switch to the *Sounds of Palestine* afternoon program, which they can attend, until they finish school. They attend the program several afternoons a week for a total of four to six hours, during which they receive instrumental lessons in groups, play in an orchestra, sing in a choir, receive instruction in musical theory, paint and craft under guidance. The children also have the opportunity to demonstrate their progress by playing several concerts a year. During summer vacation, music summer school programs are offered for all participating children.

In the afternoon program, the children are given healthy snacks and, at least once a week according to their timetable, a freshly cooked lunch. To ensure the safety of the children, the project has its own transportation service, which picks up the children at arranged meeting points and brings them back after class.

#### **First grade activities**

- Singing in a choir, moving to music, and percussion.
- Familiarization with the instruments on offer (violin, cello, contrabass, clarinet, transverse flute, percussion) and selection of a favorite instrument.
- Playing music in groups and in the orchestras.
- Short instrumental lessons in small groups and introduction to musical theory.

#### **Activities for second and higher grades**

- Playing music in groups and orchestras, singing in a choir, percussion, instrumental lessons in small groups and advanced musical theory.
- Introduction of additional classical instruments as well as local traditional instruments.
- Advanced children are taught to assist younger children with their learning process.

### 3.5 Impressions from the afternoon program

*"I love playing music and I love being here with you because it's the only place where my life is easy."*

**Seven-year-old cello student**



*"Here I have really learned to respect people, even if they're different from me."*

*I feel at home here and Sounds of Palestine is like a family for me."*

**Eleven-year-old cello student**

*"When I play music, I feel lots of positive energy."*

*And I can let go of my stress because I feel very good."*

**Twelve-year-old contrabass student**



*"It feels very different here than in the camp. In the camp, there's lots of violence, but here I feel safe and when I play the violin, I'm happy."*

**Eight-year-old violin student**



## 4. Milestones and prospects

Timeline	Developmental steps
From December 2009	Initiator Katja Eckardt develops the idea for the project.
July/August 2011	Trip to Palestine to search for a suitable location where the project would be welcomed. Decision to begin the implementation of the project in the Bethlehem region.
July 2012	Application process and hiring of local staff in Bethlehem.
September 2012	Project begins in Bethlehem with the kindergarten program. All of the children in the participating kindergartens receive regular lessons in early music education in groups.
September 2013	The afternoon program starts with first grade students. From this point on, the program is expanded by one grade each year, enabling the participating children to remain in the program for years.
April 2015	The Katharina-Werk is registered as an international organization in Palestine with legal representation.
2019	The decision is made to build a new building for the project to cover the space requirements in the long term and ensure the quality of the project.
2020/2021	<p>The Covid-19 pandemic defines everyday life and makes in-person instruction impossible for extended periods of time. Lessons are therefore taught online, and the instruments are taken home so that the children can actively participate in online instruction from home. Hygiene guidelines for in-person instruction in small groups and an adapted schedule are also established to enable in-person or online instruction depending on infection rates. Contact to the children is maintained with regular phone calls.</p> <p>Given the current situation the project to build a new building is put on hold.</p>
2022	<p>In 2022 the project celebrated its 10th birthday. Various on-site activities are planned.</p> <p>During the 2021/2022 school year around 90 kindergarten children take part in group lessons. The afternoon program is attended by 170 children ranging from first to ninth grade.</p>
Prospects	<p><i>The Sounds of Palestine</i> program is a sustainable project thanks to its continuous and long-term instruction and care for the children. The plan is to continue to admit new first-graders into the program and enable the older children to continue participating in the program until they have finished school. Therefore, until the program encompasses the highest grade in 2024, the number of participating children will steadily increase.</p> <p>The situation in Palestine is volatile. In the past, <i>Sounds of Palestine</i> has proven its ability to continue its work even in extremely difficult times, thus offering a good basis for the future.</p>



## 5. Impact

### 5.1 Quality assurance and monitoring

A multiple-year study<sup>2</sup> of the program's impact on the participating children is currently being conducted. In addition, the project team (project manager, music teachers, social pedagogical staff) has regular meetings in which the project's progress is evaluated and the challenges it faces are documented in writing. Based on their conclusions, the project activities are adapted as needed.

The project team is in close contact with locals so that they often have informal conversations with parents about the project. The information thus gained is additionally used to better gauge the effect of the program on the children and to make changes as needed.

The project is also being documented with photos, videos, and audio clips, which enables an evaluation of its quality and impact.

Furthermore, the professionalism of the staff is an important component for the project. For that reason, a great deal of importance is placed on the professional development of our employees, possibility of regular training courses and education opportunities.

### 5.2 Results

Based on the local impact assessment, the following positive developments have been observed:

- The kindergarten teachers and parents of the children of the afternoon program, have reported that the children are much calmer, more relaxed and more content on the days they have music lessons, than on other days.
- Children, who otherwise seldom or never participate in group activities, are integrated into the group during music lessons and contribute according to their abilities.
- Overall, the children show a greater ability to concentrate and willingness to cooperate.
- The children's self-esteem and self-confidence increases significantly. The children in the afternoon program are progressively learning to listen to one another, help each other and perceive the progress of other groups. In addition, observations have indicated that children have more respectful interactions with each other and that they find it easier to follow rules.
- The project is very appreciated by locals and has attracted international attention. The orchestra has been repeatedly invited to participate in local and international festivals and events, for example the Dutch King's Day at the Representative Office of the Netherlands in Ramallah and at the Beit Lahem Life Festival.

## 6. Financing

### 6.1 Financial strategy

Katharina-Werk Basel has its own financial contribution to the project and provides support in the areas of administration and bookkeeping. In addition, the project receives support from volunteer staff. All other costs are covered by donations. Applications for financial support are primarily submitted to funding foundations, associations, and church organizations in Switzerland, Germany and other countries. Furthermore, benefit concerts and private fundraising events are held for the project. In the long run, additional donors are to be found in Palestine and the neighboring Arabic countries.

*Sounds of Palestine* is a long-term program without an end date. It will thus require constant funding/donations. Until now, there have been several different sources of donations. The aim is to

---

<sup>2</sup> The long-term evaluation/study was started in 2016 and is being conducted by an external, independent examiner. It is based on a questionnaire consisting of fifteen closed and three open-ended questions which the parents/caregivers of the participating children answer each year. The focus is on certain behaviors and changes in the child.

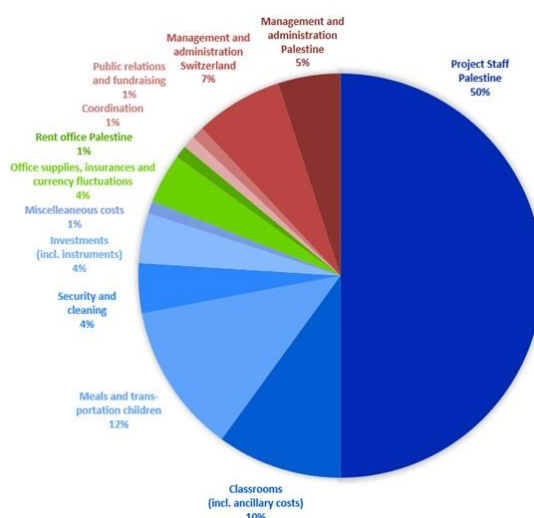
maintain a diverse base of donations to minimize the risks. Another goal is to find more supporters who are prepared to support the program over a longer period of time to ensure its sustainable funding.

A summary of donations from funding foundations, donating institutions, private donors and patrons of recent years, is available upon request.

### 6.2 Expense structure

The expenses of 2021 were under budget with a total of CHF 403'000 spent. The deviations were on the one hand due to Corona and resulted from the switch to online teaching. As it became clear during the course of the year that it had become significantly more difficult to find the necessary funds for the project, investments that were not absolutely necessary were furthermore postponed for the time being. The expenses of 2021 are as followed:

- Direct project costs 327'000 CHF (81%)
- Management and administration 58'000 CHF (14%)
- Material expenses 18'000 CHF ( 5%)



This cost breakdown does not include the hours of work carried out by volunteers in management and fundraising.

These hours are recorded and listed in the annual report. In 2021, they amounted to approximately 850 working hours. The hours of work carried out on a voluntary basis by the board of directors are not recorded.

### 6.3 Funding areas

#### Cost per child per year

Item	CHF	1'000
Music lessons incl. socio-pedagogical support	CHF	1'000
Healthy break catering and hot meals	CHF	100
Safe transport between home and music school	CHF	150
<b>Total cost per child per year</b>	<b>CHF</b>	<b>1250</b>

#### Unit costs per year and per half year

	Per year		Per half year	
Music lessons incl. socio-pedagogical support	CHF	172'000	CHF	86'000
Healthy break catering and hot meals	CHF	20'000	CHF	10'000
Safe transport between home and music school	CHF	30'000	CHF	15'000